

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets comprising the steps of:
 - providing coated sheets of metal having opposing first and second surfaces;
 - creating a raised region on at least one of the coated sheets, the raised region formed on the first surface by lancing at least one embossment on at least one coated metal sheet, the embossment comprising a depression having a raised peripheral edge, and wherein the second surface remains continuous and uninterrupted;
 - juxtaposing the coated sheets to introduce a gap therebetween, the gap defined by the raised region; and
 - applying a laser beam forming a laser weld wherein gases produced during the forming of the laser weld escape via the gap [[at least one embossment]].
2. (Cancelled)
3. (Currently Amended) A [[The]] method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to Claim 1 wherein the step of creating a raised region comprises applying comprising the steps of:
 - providing coated sheets of metal having opposed first and second surfaces;
 - creating a raised region on at least one of the coated sheets, the raised region formed on the first surface by plasma spraying fine particles between the plurality of coated metal sheets;
 - introducing a gap between the coated metal sheets, the gap defined by the raised region;
 - and
 - applying a laser beam forming a laser weld wherein gases produced during the forming of the laser weld escape via the gap.

4. (New) The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to claim 1 wherein said step of creating a raised region comprises punching an array of embossments.
5. (New) The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to claim 4 wherein the raised peripheral edge has a thickness of about 0.007 inches.
6. (New) The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to claim 3 wherein the fine particles are zinc dust.
7. (New) The method of laser welding a plurality of coated metal sheets according to claim 3 wherein the fine particles are steel dust.